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ABSTRACT

The new Colorado Student Assessment Program (CSAP) was developed to provide a measurement of how well students and schools are meeting Colorado's academic content standards. The CSAP tests are not norm-referenced showing how much a student has learned in comparison with other students. Instead, they are based on the state's content standards. Testing will take place each spring, and results will be reported as "Advanced," "Proficient," "Partially Proficient," and "Unsatisfactory." Some of the questions parents are likely to ask about the CSAP are answered. (SLD)

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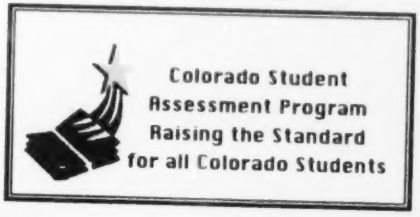
How are Colorado students and schools measuring up?

A parent's guide to the *Colorado Student Assessment Program*



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Colorado's Yardstick for Student Achievement

For the past several years, as part of a major effort to raise student achievement, Colorado schools have been putting into place rigorous *academic content standards*. These standards clearly spell out the skills and knowledge students should acquire in core subject areas. Simply put, standards state what students should be learning.

But setting standards is just the first step to helping kids learn more. There must also be a way to tell how well students and schools are meeting standards. Parents, educators, and the public want to know how well Colorado students and schools are measuring up.

The new **Colorado Student Assessment Program (CSAP)** was developed to provide just such a measurement. This assessment is based on the state model content standards, which were developed by Colorado educators and community members. The results of CSAP will give an accurate picture of how well Colorado students are meeting standards.

A Different but More Useful Test

CSAP is a different type of test that will provide you with more useful information about your child and school.

You are probably familiar with *norm-referenced tests* such as the Iowa Test of Basic Skills (ITBS). Such tests are not necessarily based on what your child actually has been taught in school. These tests provide information about how much your child has learned as *compared to other children*.

Picture a group of students climbing a mountain. A norm-referenced test tells you whether a given student is in the lead, near the middle of the group, or lagging behind. It will not tell you where each student is on the mountainside.

CSAP, on the other hand, is based on the state model content standards. It will show where the student is located on the mountain, or, in this case, how well your child is meeting the standards. It will give you a clearer picture of your child's achievement.

The Testing Schedule

Testing will take place each spring. The first test results will be released mid-November, 1997.

	Spring 1997	Spring 1998	Spring 1999	Spring 2000	Spring 2001
3rd graders		reading	reading	reading	reading
4th graders	reading & writing	reading & writing	reading & writing	reading & writing	reading & writing
5th graders			math	math	math
8th graders				math	math & science

An Honest Look

You will notice some differences in the way student results are reported. Scores will be broken down into four categories: *Advanced*, *Proficient*, *Partially Proficient*, and *Unsatisfactory*. A student who scores "Proficient" has mastered the content.

You may be surprised at how low your child, your school, or the state as a whole has scored. There are several reasons why scores may be low for the first few years.

- This test is based on rigorous standards. All students are expected to learn more.
- Schools have been implementing standards for a short time. It will take some time to readjust curriculum and teaching practices to support the new standards.
- CSAP is the first statewide standards-based assessment to be administered in Colorado. It will give educators, parents, and the public an honest look at how well students and schools are achieving.

Questions & Answers

Q. What is the purpose of CSAP?

A. The Colorado Department of Education is administering this test to give parents, the public, and educators a uniform source of information on how well students and schools are achieving.

Q. What if my child scores low on the test?

A. Remember, CSAP shows you just one piece of your child's overall performance in school. It provides a "snapshot" of your child's skills at one point in time. In order to receive a full picture, you need to consider the grades your child receives on class assignments, tests, and regular report cards. Talk to your child's teacher to get all the information. Each school district should have plans in place to address the needs of those students who require additional assistance to meet standards.

Q. Who do I call to find out more information about my child's scores?

A. Contact your child's teacher or school principal for an individual report on how well your child did on the tests.

More Questions & Answers

Q. How will schools and districts use the test results?

A. It is up to each district to determine how to use individual student test results. Only locally elected school boards may determine graduation requirements, establish school curriculum, and set policies for grade retention and promotion. Test results will most likely be used to aid teachers and administrators in improving instruction.

Q. What is the test based on?

A. The statewide assessment is based on the state model content standards developed by Colorado educators and community members. The standards were reviewed by over 10,000 Coloradans. Though the curriculum varies from district to district, the expectation of what students are learning is consistent across the state, allowing for a fair and uniform assessment of Colorado students.

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